

AGENDA ITEM #11b

March 11, 2005

To: Delta Protection Commission

From: Margit Aramburu, Executive Director

Subject: Support for Efforts to Address Delta Dredging and Levee Maintenance
(For Commission Discussion and Possible Action)

BACKGROUND:

The Commission has long supported efforts to simplify, speed up, and reduce costs associated with dredging in the Delta to support key Delta land uses including navigation, recreation, habitat values, and levee maintenance. There are two separate efforts underway to support such activities.

LAND USE AND RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR THE PRIMARY ZONE OF THE DELTA (Plan):

The Commission's Plan includes several *recommendations* regarding this topic:

6. *A clearinghouse for materials suitable for levee maintenance should be created to assist in distributing appropriate materials to sites slated for maintenance work. Materials which have value for levee maintenance work, such as materials routinely dredged from Delta channels...should be reserved first for levee maintenance work...*
7. *Study appropriateness of materials from other sources for levee maintenance and repair, similar to the Long Term Management Strategy prepared for the San Francisco Bay region.*
8. *To lower levee maintenance costs, streamlined permitting systems for authorization of dredging for levee maintenance and rehabilitation work...and for levee upgrading to mandated standards...should be instituted with one state agency designated as lead agency and one federal agency designated as lead agency...*
9. *The program for emergency levee repair should be strengthened...An emergency program should develop a funding program to assist reclamation districts that are unable to pay such costs.*

AGRICULTURE AND LEVEES COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Committee reviewed the two proposals at the February 24, 2005 meeting and recommended supporting these efforts subject to a public process and review of specific language in the future.

CALIFORNIA DELTA RESOURCE CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT (RC&D) COUNCIL:

The new, nonprofit California Delta RC&D Council is researching a regional general permit for dredging and levee maintenance permits as part of its 2005 Work Plan. The Council has researched such permits in other regions, discussed the concept, and met with all of the Delta Water Agencies and obtained their support.

A regional general permit would be pursued with the Army Corps of Engineers, who would coordinate with federal wildlife agencies and the Department of Fish and Game, and with the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board.

RECOMMENDATION: The Commission should discuss and possibly direct staff to prepare a letter of support for a regional permit for dredging for levee maintenance subject to a public process and review of specific language in the future.

CONTRA COSTA COUNTY AND CORPS OF ENGINEERS:

Contra Costa County and the Corps of Engineers are seeking federal funding to prepare and implement a long term dredging management strategy to allow reuse of dredged material from the Bay Area in the Delta for levee maintenance. The sponsors are also supporting maintenance of the Port shipping channels in the Delta, and developing reuse strategies for that dredged material. Contra Costa County and the Corps see these programs as supportive of the CALFED program.

RECOMMENDATION: The Commission should discuss and possibly direct staff to prepare a letter of support for federal funding for preparation and implementation of a Long Term Strategy for Dredging and Disposal for the Delta, subject to a public process and review of specific language in the future.